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Lewisville, HV, FM candidates offer views at forum

BY DAN EAKIN, Staff Writer

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Candidates for Lewisville, Highland Village and Flower Mound city offices expressed their views Thursday night before a full house in the meeting room of the Lewisville Area Chamber of Commerce.

In a forum sponsored by the Denton County Republican Men's Club, two candidates for Place 1 and one candidate for Place 3 on the Lewisville City Council, three Highland Village mayoral candidates and two Flower Mound Town Council candidates gave opening statements, answered questions and then gave closing statements.

With County Criminal Court Judge Jim Crouch moderating, the candidates told why they were seeking to be elected or re-elected and discussed issues facing their individual cities.

Greg Tierney, incumbent councilman for Place 1 on the Lewisville City Council, and his challenger, John Gorena both gave reasons as to why they are in the race.

"I just didn't feel like I was being represented," Gorena said. He said he objected to the city's initial plans to build a day laborer site, opposes tax abatements for companies "who would locate in Lewisville anyway," and that he doesn't think it is the city council's place to decide whether restaurants and other businesses should allow or ban smoking.

Gorena said the problem of illegal immigration is the number one issue in Lewisville, and that he believes city police should be more involved in solving the problems.

Tierney responded, "I support our efforts in the fight against illegal immigration. Currently, we are operating a program where we work closely with federal officials where we send suspected illegals to Immigration. We somewhat have our hands tied in enforcing federal immigration laws due to court rulings."

Tierney said the day laborer site proposal "is a dead issue, unless somebody wants to bring it up again."

He said he believes he should be re-elected because he has had seven years of experience on the council. He said a low voter turnout in recent Lewisville city elections is a sign that people are satisfied with the council as it is.

"I am proud to be a part of this current council," Tierney said. "One thing Lewisville residents should be proud of is the lack of controversy in our city hall, our neighborhoods, business community and amongst our council."

Lathan Watts, the incumbent seeking re-election for Place 3, also participated in the forum even though his challenger, David Fogle, was not present.

Watts said he wants to protect property owners' rights, and noted that he voted against denying homeowners the right to convert garages into rooms, the smoking ban and

extending drinking hours from midnight to 2 a.m.

All three Highland Village mayoral candidates were on hand for the forum, including Mayor Dianne Costa and her challengers, Fred Busche and Gene Costa.

"My desire to seek re-election as mayor of Highland Village is not a decision I take lightly," Dianne Costa said. "While I may not always make decisions that are embraced by everyone, there is never a doubt as to where I stand on the issues."

"Several years ago, I made a commitment to place communication as a top priority for Highland Village," she said. "I have made good on that endeavor, facilitating one-on-one meetings with Homeowners Association groups throughout the city. I frequently spend Tuesdays at city hall, meeting with residents not only to address their concerns, but also often to explore ways to include individuals or groups in community events."

Busche, a former longtime member of the Highland Village City Council, named several reasons why he wants to be elected mayor.

"I have a vision for Highland Village for the next 20 years that I think will allow us to not just be the safest city in North Texas or dream of being the best city in Texas, but realize that dream through the use of planning for the future," Busche said.

"We need to make sure that we are not blinded by the money that potential development could bring and ignore the residents that might be impacted by that development," he continued. "I want to involve our citizens more in the process by putting together citizen advisory committees before development occurs."

Gene Costa said he is often asked why he, as an 18-year-old student, would want to be mayor.

He said the fact that he entered the race has sparked more interest in city government not only among people his own age, but also among older citizens in the community.

He said he believes property taxes could be lowered because of new revenue from new shops and the new Wal-Mart in Highland Village. He also wants the number of signatures required on a petition for a recall election to be significantly reduced.

Crouch asked each candidate for Highland Village mayor to name both the positives and the negatives of having the new Wal-Mart and shops in the city.

All three candidates agreed that the tax revenue generated by the new stores is a positive, while traffic congestion is a negative. Wal-Mart now hires police officers to direct traffic out of the shopping center parking lot and will continue to do so until a traffic light can be installed.

Two Flower Mound Town Council candidates also participated in the forum, even though their opponents did not appear.

Steve Dixon, candidate for Place 2, and Jean Levenick, candidate for Place 4, both said that economic development in the city is a major issue in order to relieve the tax burden on the residents.

Al Filidoro, Place 2 candidate, and Virginia Jellison, Place 4 candidate, were not present.

Flower Mound Mayor Jody Smith, who is running unopposed, was present but did not participate in the forum.

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